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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: AMERICA IN THE CAMPAIGN: SNAPSHOT FROM SW GERMANY

REF: A. A) FRANKFURT 6748

[1](#)B. B) BERLIN 2988

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[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: In Frankfurt's relatively pro-American district, attitudes towards the U.S. and U.S. foreign policy appear to play a smaller role in this German election campaign than in 2002. While some on the left have tried to raise issues of war and peace, overall the campaign in our district has focused much more on domestic economic issues. END SUMMARY.

SPD, Greens: Remember the War In Iraq?

[1](#)2. (U) At campaign events in post's district, Social Democratic Party (SPD) representatives including Chancellor Schroeder regularly remind the electorate of their administration's "no" to military participation in Iraq while using a more subtle tone than in 2002 (or even at the start of the campaign). In June, the Chancellor proclaimed to a thousand party faithful in Mainz that "nobody should believe" that conservative chancellor candidate Angela Merkel will not deploy German soldiers in Iraq, criticizing her for not opposing the U.S. at the time of the Iraq invasion. At rallies later in the campaign, however, Schroeder acknowledged the conservatives' new tack (i.e., their refusal to endorse military interventions in Iran and Iraq), commenting ironically that "the Lord welcomes every remorseful sinner" (Esslingen, August 24). Schroeder recently told audiences in our district that while he does not doubt the opposition's desire to pursue a peaceful foreign policy, he does doubt their ability to do so.

[1](#)3. (U) Green candidates in our district are often more strident in criticizing U.S. interventionism. At the Hesse state nominating convention in June, Greens national co-chair Claudia Roth predicted that Merkel's blind support for the U.S. and for President Bush would drag Germany into military conflicts, noting that issues of war and peace are the biggest difference between the current German administration and the conservative/liberal opposition. Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer struck a more moderate tone: in Stuttgart (Sep. 10) and Frankfurt (Sep. 14), Fisher reminded audiences of the threats facing Germany -- particularly terrorism and Middle East instability -- and reaffirmed German support for the transatlantic alliance but underscored that Germany must be able to part ways with the United States where U.S. policy is misguided. "Our decision not to send troops to Iraq was not an easy one but loyalty to the U.S. does not mean following blindly." (NOTE -- along similar lines, an SPD campaign poster features the slogan "For Peace / Against Blindly Following" -- END NOTE).

Left Party: Lambasting U.S. Policy

[1](#)4. (U) Left Party (Linkspartei) representatives openly criticize U.S. foreign and environmental policy, but the U.S. is usually sidelined at their events which focus almost exclusively on domestic issues. At a rally in Mainz (Sep. 9), party

co-chair

Oskar Lafontaine called for an end to German participation in the war in Iraq via U.S. forces who use bases in Germany.

Lafontaine

called on the government to respect former Chancellor Willy Brandt's desire that Germany wage no more wars from within its borders and has stated repeatedly that Germany will not be fully sovereign until all American bases and soldiers have left the country (ref B). Arguing that the West's military actions in the

Middle East only create more terrorists, Lafontaine railed against U.S. policy, proclaiming that young German soldiers should not die for oil. While Left representatives express sympathy for the victims of Hurricane Katrina -- at a rally in Frankfurt (Sep. 2), co-chair Gregor Gysi said "we need to help the Americans, because they helped us so often before" -- they also blame the storm and rising energy prices on alleged U.S. failure to tackle issues of climate change and energy consumption.

Conservatives: Focus on Turkey more than Transatlantic Ties

15. (U) At campaign events, Christian Democratic (CDU) candidates stressed the importance of the transatlantic relationship but downplayed the prospect of German participation in further military operations, focusing on other foreign policy issues such as Turkey and Russia. At a rally in southern Baden-Wuerttemberg (Sep. 13), Wolfgang Schaeuble (deputy head of the CDU/CSU Bundestag caucus) said that a CDU/CSU/FDP coalition would seek better ties to the U.S., but focused on European politics, criticizing Schroeder's Paris-Berlin-Moscow axis which it sees as alienating other European countries. Opposition to Turkey's EU accession (by offering a "privileged partnership") is a frequent refrain: Merkel declared in Stuttgart (Sep. 14) that "Schroeder has asked all Germans of Turkish decent to vote SPD ... therefore I ask all Germans who prefer a privileged partnership with Turkey to vote CDU."

16. (U) This cable has been coordinated with Embassy Berlin.
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